

**DETERMINING CRITICAL SUCCESS CRITERIA TO MITIGATE THE PROBLEM OF
ATTRITION AMONG NON-VESTED EMPLOYEES**

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The problem was that Tamarac Fire Rescue had been experiencing a high degree of turnover among non-vested personnel. Since adding the Emergency Medical Services division to the fire department in late 1996, almost doubling the size of the department, Tamarac Fire Rescue began losing a significant amount of its non-vested employees.

The purpose of this research project was to identify critical success criteria to mitigate, or help reduce, the high attrition rate of the non-vested employees.

Action research methods were used to answer the following questions:

1. What are the consequences of high turnover on organizations that experience this phenomenon?
2. What are the reasons non-vested personnel are leaving Tamarac Fire Rescue?
3. How does Tamarac Fire Rescue's attrition rate compare to other departments in the area?
4. What methods can Tamarac Fire Rescue employ to encourage personnel to stay with the organization?

Procedures used in this project were an extensive review of literature pertaining to the subject of employee turnover, attrition, and retention and two other tools: a survey of departments in the Broward County area and a personal interview with each available individual whom had left Tamarac Fire Rescue since 1996.

A summary of the results of this research revealed some of the consequences of high turnover in an organization, reasons non-vested personnel were leaving Tamarac, how we compared to other

departments in the area, and methods that Tamarac Fire Rescue can use to mitigate attrition.

A summary of recommendations included: a review of current management practices throughout the city as well as the fire department, the development of a new hiring process to include employee agreements and a new orientation program, development of a plan to meet or exceed industry standards in terms of compensation, promotional opportunities, and physical growth, development of a committee to study and develop plans to alleviate, or eliminate the problems that were identified and create a process in which to empower employees, and a review of possible retirement plans .

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INTRODUCTION

The problem is that Tamarac Fire Rescue is experiencing a high turnover among non-vested personnel. The purpose of this project is to determine critical success criteria to mitigate, or help reduce, the high turnover rate among non-vested employees at Tamarac Fire Rescue.

Action research was used to help answer the following questions:

1. What are the consequences of high turnover on organizations that experience this phenomenon?
2. What are the reasons personnel are leaving Tamarac Fire Rescue?
3. How does Tamarac Fire Rescue attrition rate compare to other departments in the area?
4. What methods can Tamarac Fire Rescue employ to encourage employees to stay with the organization?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Tamarac Fire Rescue began in 1975. The department serves a community predominantly made up of retired citizens in a residential bedroom community. While time has changed the demographics of the community since its inception, it is still a relatively new, or newer, community with very little crime. The current population is 52, 413. Because it is a modern community which has adhered to current building codes standards there has been little property loss due to fire damage in the past 25, or so, years. The average fire loss is approximately \$500,000 and less annually (Tamarac Fire Rescue Annual Report, 1998). Because the area does have a large retirement population with an average age of 71,

most of the EMS calls that Tamarac Fire Rescue responds to are ALS calls and most of them do require invasive treatment in the field and subsequent transport to the nearby hospitals.

In 1975 the city of Tamarac began its fire department. In 1980, the city added another fire station to accommodate the needs of the community. Since that time, there has been relatively little change in this fire department's structure or responses. However, in 1996, Tamarac Fire Rescue added the service of EMS to accommodate the community's needs for ALS and BLS. Prior to that time, the EMS needs were met by allowing other agencies to supply these needs, either through a private organization such as an ambulance company, or through the county's EMS services who, while housed in the same buildings, were not a part of the fire department's employed personnel. When it was decided to add EMS to the department's response obligations to better serve the community, the department had to hire numerous trained persons to run this part of the service both in management and labor. A new EMS division was initiated and several management positions were formed. Most of these personnel, labor and management, were hired from outside the department.

Unit 7 of the Executive Development Course in the Executive Fire Officer Program pertains to Organizational Culture. Tamarac Fire Rescue had developed an organizational culture that did not include the responsibilities of EMS response. Trying to adapt to this significant change in service delivery has caused considerable changes in the organizations culture and has a direct impact on the turnover rate of non-vested employees, as well as operations and personnel management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The undesired loss of competent people is costly to an organization in both direct and indirect terms. The obvious direct costs are those expended in the hiring and entry processes. Hiring costs include advertising, recruiting travel expenses, time spent by key personnel interviewing, testing and physical examination costs, costs of generating new records, protective clothing and uniforms, moving expenses, and special inducement expenditures, (bonuses, housing expenses, etc.). In *Managing Professional People*, 1985, Shapero wrote, “In addition to direct employment costs there are the entry costs that include orientation and training efforts that can range from formal courses (i.e. orientation sessions, security instructions, etc.) to non-formal orientation efforts such as learning where and how to get internal information, how to get something done within the system, or the location of the nearest sandwich shop”(p. 20).

The estimated costs of hiring a professional for one data processing company were more than \$9,000 for a hypothetical \$18,000 a year position, with higher salaried positions entailing higher hiring costs. The same study estimated that training costs were close to \$16,000, including direct support to the new employee during the first few months and learning-curve costs. The hard measurable costs of hiring and orienting a professional for an organization have been estimated to be on the order of \$20,000- \$30,000, and the hard costs fall short of realistic total costs.(Shapero, 1985)

Rivera, in his EFOP-ARP (Executive Fire Officer Program-Advanced Research Project), titled *Attrition Rate As It Relates To Employee Loyalty and Retention*, 1999, reports an estimated cost of replacing a firefighter at \$16, 146, and the actual cost of replacing a firefighter at El Paso Fire Department at \$65,000. This author’s survey of Broward County Fire Departments reported an

estimated cost of training and orientation for a firefighter as \$12,187.50 (Appendix B)

Edward Roseman's book *Managing Employee Turnover*, published in 1981 is cited in nearly every study this author looked at for information on employee turnover. While it is becoming dated, it has undergone numerous reprints and much of his information is still valid. Roseman tells us that there are other costs associated with turnover. "Other indirect costs are: low morale, disruption of staffing as well as key projects, mistakes flourish as overloaded employees try to fill in until replacements are hired, overtime, and most importantly the problem may turn epidemic. Those leaving may share their negative viewpoints about the workplace influencing others to possibly leave as well. Some of those who leave may be informal leaders and work groups may break down as well" (p. 9).

The extensive literature on the subject of turnover points out that the major factors affecting turnover are organizational and managerial, though there is also considerable evidence relating personal factors to voluntary turnover. In general, younger employees are more likely to leave than are older ones. Much has been written about the new generation that is entering the marketplace; the term Generation X has been used to describe this group. While stereotyping a group of people has its drawbacks, there are certain truths and characteristics that emerge.

Because all of the employees who left Tamarac Fire Rescue fell in the age group that has been labeled Generation X with a mean age of 26.4 years of age, a review of some of the literature that deals with this group of young people was deemed necessary by the author. Many of the characteristics and trends that define this group correlated to the employees Tamarac had hired since 1996. Specific management tools and techniques are suggested in the literature that deals with this generation.

There are some common misconceptions about Generation X that need to be looked at and

dispelled, or at least understood. In *Managing Generation X*, 1995, Tulgan wrote, “These misconceptions are: Gen X people are disloyal, they have short attention spans, they are cynics, they are arrogant and inflexible (spoiled child syndrome), and that they are slackers” (p.32).

Other studies have shown that if management uses a different approach to deal with these employees, they can be productive, extremely creative, self-starters, and leadership oriented. They will accept responsibility and run with it, if they are given the support they need. It is important to know some of the basic characteristics of this generation if management is going to use these people to their best capacity.

In an article from *Public Management*, December, 1997, entitled, *Generation X: What They Think And What they Plan To Do*, Losyk wrote, Generation X people have a tendency to have a negative view of the world, probably from watching coverage of wars and violence on TV more than any other generation thus far. Media constantly reminds them of escalating crime statistics, AIDS, pollution and nuclear threat. About half of the Gen Xer’s are products of divorce. Many of these Gen Xer’s often found themselves alone at home, hence the term “turn-key” children, as both parents worked, or the single parent was forced to work several jobs to make ends meet. This produced “home-alone individualists” but also made these people more diverse as they looked to others for close relationships they lacked at home. They became independent which is where the misconception of disloyalty comes in. This generation will not “slave away” as they saw their grandparents do only to receive a gold watch when they retire. If they are not getting what they want out of the workplace, either financially, or more importantly, in terms of self-fulfillment, they will leave. They crave attention, like to have fun even at work, often question the boss, and have unrealistic and materialistic views, however

they also have a propensity to get things done, show greater entrepreneurship and often leadership, better family values, a better grasp of technological changes as this field has developed as they've grown up, and are keen in business.

Generation X wants responsibility but they have to have opportunity as well. They also need feedback; they want to be told if they are doing a good job, or not and are willing to adapt to that feedback as necessary. (Tulgan, 1995)

“Extreme” personality traits have been related to a tendency to voluntary turnover. Individuals who manifest such traits to a lesser degree show a higher degree of retention.

One study compared retention of High performers versus Low performers among scientists and engineers and found the personal factors that predicted stayers and leavers were the following:

“High performers stay, Low performers leave, when importance is attached to the opinion of colleagues outside the organization and to maintaining contacts outside the organization. High performers leave, but there is no difference for low performers, when there is high professional orientation. Both stay at the same rate in the case of older employees” (Roseman, 1981, p. 89).

Geography and streams of migration are factors as well. The movements of professional workers to a particular geographic location are strongly correlated with well-trodden general migratory pathways (Roseman, 1981). Some of those personnel who left Tamarac Fire Rescue since 1996 and went to fire departments outside the Broward County area left due to this geographic migration. In fact, many wanted to work closer to their homes which were in the Dade County area. (Addendum B)

Negativity is obviously the absence of optimism, what psychologists call negative cognitive appraisal– the art of continually telling yourself that success is impossible, that you’ll fight to the finish, then lose (Reinhold, 1996). Many of the personnel who recently left Tamarac reported as a significant factor in their choosing to leave was that “veteran employees were too negative”. In fact, one stated that though he loved the job and department, “within fifteen minutes of coming to work, I wanted to go home sick because of all the negativism from the veteran employees”. Feeling negative erodes not only your intellectual and emotional power, but your physical strength as well. Reinhold, in her book *Toxic Work*, 1996, gave this example:

Jack Canfield, president of the Self-Esteem Seminars asks for volunteers to come to the front of the room and face the group. He then asks the volunteer to make a fist and hold out his/her arm with as much strength as they can muster. He says he can almost never push it down on the first try. Then comes the interesting part. Canfield instructed the volunteer to close his/her eyes and repeat the phrase: “I am a weak and unworthy person.” After repeating the phrase ten times, the volunteer is asked to hold his/her arm out again and to resist as hard as they can. When pushed down this time, the arm immediately goes down. Conversely, if the volunteers are asked to repeat a positive phrase several times over, such as, “I am a strong and worthy person”, the arm once again becomes strong and immovable.(p.98).

A work environment that encourages adversarial relationships drives employees away.

Whenever employees feel that they are not getting a fair share of rewards, status, workload, or

opportunities, the work environment becomes inhospitable. When a company keeps employees guessing about what's going to happen next, the work environment becomes unhealthy. (Roseman, 1981).

A department in itself does not create negativity. As with turnover, negativity problems can be attributed to managerial practices, but they may also be attributed to organizational culture. An organization whose culture has stayed status quo, as did Tamarac's for some sixteen years does not accept change well. Change to an organization's culture can also create negativity (Reinhold, 1996). The symptoms of arrested growth are: low energy, low enthusiasm, lack of commitment, disinterest in work assignments, chronic complainers, cynicism. (Roseman, 1981). Most of the veteran employees at Tamarac would submit that the negativity arises from hiring management personnel from outside the organization. In truth, personnel from inside had been promoted to these same positions and either quit on their own accord, or were demoted from not doing the job in an acceptable manner. According to Mercer in *Hire The Best*, 1993, "problem promotions" evolve due to several factors:

Personnel who are ready but not qualified: some employees feel they are ready for the next advancement but are not qualified due to lack of educational background, or other reasons.

Personnel who are qualified but not ready: these employees have done the necessary background work, education, etcetera, but are not psychologically ready for the position.

Personnel who are not ready, nor qualified: these people may believe that time on the job mandates that they be promoted no matter how they have prepared themselves.

To counter negativity in the workplace, Outlaw, in *Smart Staffing*, 1998, suggests the following outline to better orient the new employee and possibly assist veteran employees in their career choices:

Create the proper work environment: A climate or environment must be created so that the greatest short-term performance of an individual is not the ultimate goal. Jobs that allow time for creativity give employees the opportunity to look up from their work station, see what is going on and find ways to improve.

Design the job for maximum use of skills: Don't restrict your employee's skills and motivation by hemming them in with limited responsibility. When they prove they have the desire and ability to handle additional responsibility, enlarge their positions to incorporate other areas.

Provide proper equipment and systems: Providing the most up-to-date tools...will help enrich the position and keep the employee interested.

Provide continuous learning and growth opportunities: By providing information and training employees for current positions and future development, you will prepare them for promotions or lateral opportunities in the future.

Create alternate career paths: successful companies are designing career ladders to reward those in professional or non-management paths. Not everyone desires or has the ability to be managers.

Certify skills: Reward the development of specific skills. Provide a certification program to verify that an individual has attained the new skill.

Try rotation: Many who have worked in the same position a number of years experience what

is called burnout. They've solved the same problems and performed the tasks so many times that the job becomes routine and boring and performance can decrease. Rotating individuals to other assignments or positions may be what they need to become re-excited and re-energized.

Consider group job enrichment: You can enlist the support of everyone in the department or group to find ways to make the job better and more rewarding.

Avoid the inner circle syndrome: Within all organizations, smaller groups or subgroups form. This is unavoidable. The inner circle syndrome can be avoided by treating everyone equitably and ensuring that friends don't receive privileges or perks not available to others in the same position.

Formal communication: To keep the lines of communication open between management and employees.

Employee agreements: If you plan to ask a new employee to sign an employment agreement, you must mention this in the initial interview. A candidate must know early in the process that a signed employee agreement is a condition of the job. These agreements may contain language that requires the employee to payback costs of hiring, training and orientation, clothing, etc. associated with a new employee, if that person leaves before a certain and specified time.

Losyk writes that there are successful ways to manage the Gen Xer's and suggests the following:

Accept them. Don't fight them, or constantly remind them of "when I was your age".

Show them you care. They often did not get this from their parents and they need to know they

matter. Caution: don't be phony.

Show them support outside the workplace. Let them know you are aware they have a personal life and all the problems they have with it.

Don't baby them. They crave care and concern but don't want to be babied as this conflicts with their sense of independence.

Hands off but be there. Don't micro manage them but let them know you are there if needed.

Ask them questions. Ask how they are doing, how you can help but be prepared to act on their answers or you will risk losing them.

Discuss your methods. Make sure they know who you are and what your management philosophy is.

Train and orient. Meet with them often, especially when they are first starting off to show your support. Make sure they are being trained. They enjoy learning new skills and knowledge and this helps build confidence in them.

Set specific standards. It is critical to write out the specific standards of behavior, responsibilities, and policies that you expect.

Make work fun. Performance contests work well. Friendly competition keeps them motivated. Company picnics and holiday parties are important to them.

Shapero contends that it is far better to concentrate on elements of the hiring process than on the apparent characteristics of the individuals being considered (Shapero, 1985). Concentrate on effective channels of recruitment. Hires who come to an organization because of its reputation or through friends and acquaintances are the best performers for the job. Over the long term, it is possible

to enhance the flow of high-quality applicants by a program of institutional advertisements and other public relations activities that convincingly portray the organization as having high professional standards. Maintaining good public relations pays off over time. A good reputation makes it possible to obtain the quantity and quality of professional manpower desired when needed.

Set high expectations on entry. The performance of those in the new individual's immediate work environment and their response to his/her behavior will establish what is expected of them and strongly influence the individual's behavior. Once set, it takes a long time and a great many different experiences to change the effect of the early expectations experienced by the new employee.

Use personal reference networks to identify good potential hires. Good performers tend to be associated with social circles, professional or otherwise, that maintain high norms of work behavior. Substantial evidence suggests that individuals are influenced by messages from sources similar to themselves. The more someone perceives another to be like him/or herself the more it is assumed they share common tastes, standards, and goals. A relationship established over a series of exchanges creates a two-person bond which has a particular strength and which carries with it a set of norms and expectations that do much to determine the attention paid and the value placed on a message sent between two persons.

Cadwell in *New Employee Orientation*, 1988, wrote, "Orientation is a critical time. This is when a new employee develops perceptions about the organization, other employees, and supervisors. It is critical to make a positive impression during this period. New hires are naturally observant of the environment. They will notice how well things are organized, whether a business-like atmosphere exists and whether it will be an enjoyable place to work. This initial opinion, once formed, can be hard to

change. It is, therefore, essential that you do everything possible to create a positive perception. Without a well planned orientation program, new employees are forced to learn on their own. This can be time consuming and inefficient. Often an employee will lack some essential information or receive incorrect or misleading information. If an orientation program is lacking or poorly planned, considerable time will be wasted re-inventing the wheel”(p. 8-9).

A new orientation program will accomplish the following:

- Provide a welcome.
- Develop positive perceptions about the organization.
- Teach basic fundamentals each new employee would know.
- Provide a basis for training.
- Put the employee at ease (Cadwell, p. 16, 1988).

The personnel whom are leaving Tamarac Fire Rescue all fall within the age group of Generation X. Awareness of this generation’s philosophies, ethics, and motivations is paramount if they are to be retained and developed into persons who will continue with the department’s goals and, hopefully, expand upon them in a positive way. It is incumbent upon management to be assertive in the hiring, orientation, and development of this group. In *Care Packages for The Workplace*, 1996, Glanz wrote that training needs to be inspirational and uplifting. This is especially true when considering the negativity that these new employees have to overcome from veteran employees. (Appendix B).

Management needs to be aware that all employees, not just the Gen Xer’s, want the same things: interesting work, full appreciation of work done, feeling of being in on things, job security, good wages, promotion and growth in the organization, good working conditions, personal loyalty to

employees, tactful discipline, sympathetic help with personal problems (Glanz, 1996).

Job satisfaction and opportunities for growth are results of employers placing the right person in the right job and providing training and educational programs for expanding knowledge and skills. (Rivera, 1999.)

Ambitious people provide their own motivation, as long as their ambitions have a decent chance of being fulfilled. If they cease to feel that way, they'll either seek employment elsewhere or suffer a motivational collapse (Gellerman, 1992).

A real management-development function must have a say in the organization's recruitment strategies, which determine the kinds of talent that flow into a company in the first place (Gellerman, 1992).

A summary of the literature review brought about the following conclusions:

Following the observations of Roseman and Reinhold and adopting some of Outlaw, Losyk, and Cadwell's recommendations for orientation of new employees and new hiring procedures, we endeavored to devise new management practices. These practices are to include: empowering new and veteran employees by getting them involved in a project that will allow them to direct their own futures as well as that of the department. This project is the National Accreditation Program.

Additionally, a review of the current orientation program, as Cadwell suggested, compelled us to adopt a partnership program as Glanz has recommended. The partner program involves teaming veterans, or experienced employees, with new personnel. We also adopted the unit rotation, from Outlaw's recommendations, so that partners would rotate from units that traditionally run more calls to those that run fewer calls. One of the shifts at Tamarac Fire Rescue had been using a partner program

and unit rotation and had experienced the loss of only two individuals, compared to the fourteen losses among the other two shifts.

A newsletter was initiated by the administrative staff and is used for formal and informal communications as Outlaw has recommended. Additionally, an employee agreement has been developed which will assure that new personnel will reimburse the city the costs of training and orientation if the employee self-terminates employment prior to being on the job two years. (Appendix E).

Finally, as Mercer has recommended, we have set specific standards and those standards demand high performance. This recommendation evolved into creating more stringent hiring practices. Rather than just an oral interview, Tamarac candidates must also pass a practical “megacode” exam fashioned after the American Heart Association’s Advanced Cardiac Life Support program. (Appendix C)

PROCEDURES

As the theme for this research project developed, questions began to arise about not only what causes turnover in an organization but who is most likely to be affected by the turnover as well as why do some organizations suffer from attrition while others do not. A number of resources were used to collect data and pushed the project into several various directions in which to make inquiries. The Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy provided some data, including previous Executive Fire Officer Program projects relating to the subject. The library system of Palm Beach County also contained a wealth of information in book and periodical formats.

The literature review revealed general reasons that employees leave organizations prior to

retirement and specific information relating to which individuals are more likely to leave organizations presently. This information was used to develop two surveys as well as thematic impetus to lead a committee whose task was that of developing strategies for attracting and retaining a talented work force. (See Appendix D). This task was delegated by the City Manager of Tamarac to a committee of department directors and managers from various city departments, including the Personnel Director who came to the table with predetermined and general reasons why employees leave an organization.

The first survey was sent to all Broward County (population 1.49 million) fire rescue departments to see how Tamarac Fire Rescue compared to others in the area. (Appendix A). The impetus to investigate only nearby departments was motivated by the fact that one large department in the area, Ft. Lauderdale Fire Rescue, was expanding its services and geographical coverage area. Ft. Lauderdale was hiring dozens of new fire fighters. The author wanted to determine if other departments were being affected by this mass hire and if there were internal controls other departments used to control attrition. This survey also gleaned other pertinent information such as estimated costs of training, which individuals were leaving their organizations, and various information about their hiring processes that might ensure retention.

The second survey was a personal interview with those individuals who had recently left Tamarac Fire Rescue. (Appendix B). Of the sixteen whom had left Tamarac Fire Rescue, twelve were located and interviewed. The questions for this interview arose out of the literature review and information that was given by the departing individuals in non-formal exit interviews with various directors. The data collected in these interviews helped to develop critical success criteria to mitigate the problem of high turnover among non-vested employees.

Assumptions and Limitations

The survey that was sent to area departments was addressed to the chiefs of those departments. However, various individuals within those departments that answered the surveys completed the surveys. It is unknown how precise the data is that was collected and some departments may not have given accurate information due to the fact that no department desires to appear to be suffering from attrition. Knowledge gleaned from the literature review suggests that when an organization's culture develops into one whose individuals believe everyone else is leaving, it becomes very difficult to keep any of the employees. Another limitation was the fact that only approximately half of the departments that were sent the survey answered the survey.

Another limitation was the time given to complete this project. Approximately six months seemed adequate initially but when the surveys had to be developed and sent out, then returned, then the data collected, the time seemed short. The same was true of the interviews that were conducted. Individuals who had left Tamarac Fire Rescue had to be found, which took considerable time and effort, then questioned and that data had to be collated. Once again, time seemed to be a limitation with these types of data collection.

Serving on a committee whose make-up was various persons from various departments was helpful in looking at general reasons for attrition and criteria for mitigating the problem, but restricting in terms of time and specific criteria that would relate to the fire rescue department in particular.

Finally, time, once again was limiting in that we will not know for certain if the criteria that we developed to mitigate the problem is effective until the department uses the new standards for enough time to allow an accurate evaluation.

Definition Of Terms

EMS: Emergency Medical Services

ALS: Advanced Life Support

BLS: Basic Life Support

Attrition: a reduction of numbers usually a result of resignation, retirement, or death.

Accreditation: 1. to consider or recognize as outstanding. 2. to give official authority to or approval of.

a. to provide with credentials. b. to recognize or vouch for as conforming with a standard.

Turnover: the number of persons hired within a period to replace those leaving or dropped from a work force.

RESULTS

- What are the consequences of high turnover on organizations that experience this phenomenon?

Consequences of high turnover came primarily from the literature review as well as from Tamarac's own experience with this problem. The results were: Increased costs due to increased recruiting, training, and orientation needs. Disruption of staffing and increased overtime demands. Low morale. "Informal leaders" leaving and taking other members with them. Disruption or lack of continuity of programs. Increased negativity among all employees.

- What are the reasons non-vested personnel are leaving Tamarac Fire Rescue?

A tool was needed to try to determine what were some of the reasons Tamarac Fire Rescue was losing so many non-vested employees. A personal interview was conducted with most of the non-vested persons whom had left within the last three years. This interview format (Appendix B) was formulated as a result of conversations with the Fire Chief and the Personnel Director who offered some of the information they had gathered from exit interviews. Additional questions were formulated from informal discussions the author had with many of the individuals whom left the department.

From 1996, when Tamarac Fire Rescue added an EMS Division, forty-two persons were hired. Of that group of forty-two persons, sixteen chose to leave to go to other fire rescue departments; this constitutes some thirty-eight percent of new hires. Of these sixteen, we were able to contact only twelve due to some persons relocating and the time constraints placed on this project. One of the twelve that was interviewed left in the first week of preassignment training. His answers were used in the data though he had never been placed on shift and some of the reasons others gave for leaving do not necessarily correlate with that individual as he did not experience the same motivational factors that others on shift experienced. One other person left in this same time frame, 1996-1999, but he was not interviewed because he was a veteran whom had simply quit when he failed to pass a drug test. His answers would not have been valid for this format.

When an organization loses thirty-eight percent of its new hires within a three year problem there has to be some commonalities that motivate these individuals to seek employment in another organization. The following Personal Interview Format was used as a tool in an effort to determine what those commonalities were. Persons interviewed were asked to respond “yes” or “no”, or “true” or

“false” to the questions, or reasons stated and they were invited to elaborate on their answers if they desired. They were also told this interview would be anonymous and was being used for data collection only for a project with the National Fire Academy.

1. *Was higher pay a reason?*

Six of the twelve, or 50% said “Yes”.

2. *Better benefits, vacations, leaves, bonuses, incentives, etc.?*

Seven of the twelve, or 58% said “Yes”.

3. *More promotional opportunities?*

Eleven of the twelve, or 91% said “Yes”. However, only one of the respondents knew exactly what the promotional processes of their new departments entailed.

4. *Better working or living conditions?*

One respondent did not know. Seven of the other eleven respondents, or 63% said “No”.

Approximately 36% said “Yes, better living quarters” was one of the reasons they left.

5. *You just wanted to work for a larger department?*

Nine of the twelve respondents, or 75% said, “Yes”.

6. *A larger department offers a wider range of experiences?*

One of the respondents did not know. Eleven of the twelve, or 91% said “Yes”. They believed a larger department offered more experiences. As to what these experiences might be, answers varied, but most of the respondents believed their new departments had more “branches”, or “divisions” that they may choose to go into, for example “technical rescue”.

7. Veteran employees you worked with at Tamarac were too negative, or did not make you feel welcome?

One respondent had no answer as he had not been assigned to shift. Nine of the twelve respondents, or 75% said “Yes” veteran employees were too negative. All of the respondents who were assigned to shift said this should have been two questions because 100 % said they felt welcome initially, but after they came on shift, the negative environment created by disgruntled veteran employees made working at Tamarac intolerable. Several comments were made including: “I would come in to work feeling great and looking forward to running calls, but after fifteen minutes of listening to those guys (veteran) I wanted to go home sick.” Another comment was, “Time and again, I was asked why do I want to work at this hellhole. After awhile, I began to ask myself the same question.”

8. Management did not convey career opportunities to you?

Seven of the twelve respondents, or approximately 58% said, “No”, this was not a reason they left. One respondent said management conveyed opportunities but he “did not believe what they said”. Another said the Battalion Chiefs conveyed opportunities but “upper management did not”. Approximately 33% believed management did not convey career opportunities to them.

9. Management did not convey the department’s future goals to you?

Ten of the twelve respondents, or approximately 83% said “Yes”, management did convey the department’s future goals, though one said he felt “they began conveying these goals just before I left”.

10. Call volume was too high?

One respondent could not answer as he had not been assigned to shift. One respondent said “yes”, call volume was too high. Ten of the twelve respondents, or approximately 83 % said no, the call

volume was not a factor in their choosing to leave.

11. *Calls did not have enough variety?*

The one respondent whom was not assigned to shift did not know, of course. Six of the twelve respondents or 50% said “Yes”, the calls did not have enough variety and that this was another factor in their choice to work elsewhere. Approximately 33% said “No” this was not a factor in their choice to leave. One felt he had gained “a wide variety of experiences” while working at Tamarac.

12. *You wanted to fight more fires?*

Ten of the twelve respondents, or approximately 83% said “Yes” they wanted to fight more fires.

13. *Equipment/apparatus was not adequate?*

100 % of the respondents said “No”, this was not a reason they left.

14. *Was geography an issue with you? In other words you wanted to work in a certain city, or a place closer to home?*

75% of the respondents said “No” this was not a factor in their choice to leave. 25% said “Yes” it was. All of those who said “yes” had gone to Hialeah, which is also where they lived. Several of those employees who could not be reached had also gone to Hialeah initially and also lived there prior to being hired at Tamarac.

15. *Personal reasons?*

Ten of the twelve respondents or 83% said “No” there were no personal reasons that made them want to leave? One respondent said “yes”, he wanted to “get into technical rescue more”.

Another repeated the veteran’s negativity again.

16. *What is your age?*

Ages ranged from 22 to 31 years of age. The median age was 26.4 years of age. This age group falls into the bracket dubbed “Generation X”.

17. *Do you anticipate staying with your new department?*

Eleven of the respondents or approximately 91% said “Yes”. One respondent was unsure.

18. *Is there anything we could have done to keep you at Tamarac Fire Rescue?*

Ten of the respondents or 83% said “No”, there was nothing that would have kept them at Tamarac. One of the respondents said “higher pay” would have kept him there. Another said “more stations” would have made him stay.

19. *Would you consider returning to work at Tamarac Fire Rescue?*

Seven of the twelve respondents or approximately 58% said “yes” they would consider returning to work at Tamarac Fire Rescue. Two said “possibly, if things did not work out” at their new departments. Three, or 25% said “No”, they would not consider returning to work at Tamarac.

21. *Would you advise a friend/colleague to apply at Tamarac Fire Rescue?*

Eleven of the respondents or approximately 91% said “Yes”. One respondent said “No”.

22. *Are there any other reasons you left Tamarac Fire Rescue?*

This was a general question expected to stimulate general answers or perhaps bring up other reasons that had been overlooked. Approximately 66% gave no further reasons. One person said, “Having only two persons, one EMT and one paramedic, on the rescue at times made me uncomfortable”. This staffing has been updated and there is never less than three persons on the rescue truck now and always two paramedics. Another person said, “I was looking for a department that

would train me and bring me along and I did not get that here.” He added, “ I was not experienced and wanted guidance.” One said he was disappointed that the training instructors “weren’t listened to when they suggested terminating those people who were not fit for the job.” Finally, one person said the Fire Chief was the problem. “He wanted to run every little aspect of the job but there was a definite lack of direction.”

- How does Tamarac Fire Rescue’s attrition rate compare to other departments in the area?

A survey was sent to all twenty-eight fire-rescue departments in Broward County, Florida (Appendix A). Responses were sent back from fourteen departments ranging in size from small organizations, 20 personnel, to large organizations with 495 personnel. A pattern developed quickly, showing that large departments generally did not incur the turnover problem that small departments did. Tamarac Fire Rescue is a small department consisting of seventy-five paid personnel.

The number of emergency calls that departments run annually showed no correlation to turnover. This fact was reflected as well in the personal interview format that was used to interview personnel whom had left Tamarac Fire Rescue since 1996 (Appendix B).

Only four of the departments answering the survey reported a turnover problem and all reported that those leaving were going to larger departments. All four of these departments reported reasons their personnel gave for leaving were: higher pay, better benefits, and more promotional opportunities. Other reasons cited included: “to get away from negative environment/veteran co-workers” and “a larger

department would provide them with a variety of experiences”. These last reasons correlate, again, with Tamarac Fire Rescue’s departing personnel, whom also cited “higher pay” as impetus to leave.

Costs of training new personnel ranged from \$2,500.00 to \$35,000.00 per individual with no distinction offered between tangible and intangible costs. Only eight of the fourteen departments recording costs gave actual figures. All reported that there was a cost but they had no accurate figures. Dividing the total sum of training costs figures by the number of departments who reported a solid figure, an approximate cost of \$12,187.50 per individual recruit was tallied. This figure is in line with Tamarac’s estimated costs of training per recruit and includes tangible costs of: new uniforms, turnout gear and safety equipment, orientation manuals and SOG’s, instruction costs and overtime costs to fill the instructor’s positions on shift.

Nine of the fourteen departments answering the survey stated that persons leaving their departments were non-vested. Eleven departments reported ten years as the time it takes to become vested. One reported seven years time on the job as vested, and one reported five years to become vested. Tamarac Fire Rescue requires five years on the job to be vested. There was no correlation between longer vesting periods versus shorter vesting periods with turnover figures.

Only five departments described methods they employ to retain personnel but answers were general and included: higher pay, benefits, opportunities for advancement, and educational incentives. Many of these reasons correlate with reasons personnel gave for leaving to go to another department. Some singular responses were: “good morale”, “quality internal customer service”, and “great pension”. Interestingly, all of the departments who described methods they use to retain personnel also reported that they had little, or no turnover problems. Tamarac Fire Rescue has met with industry standards by

offering comparable incentives, educational pay and retirement benefits, though starting salary has been compressed. While other departments in the area are offering starting salaries of approximately \$40,000, Tamarac's starting salary is approximately \$32,000.

Only one of the departments reported they had employees sign an employee agreement, or conditional contract that would ensure the person leaving would pay back the costs of his/her recruit training. Tamarac Fire Rescue does not currently use an employee agreement.

Only two of the departments reported that they actively recruit new employees. One gave examples of using: "job fairs, fire explorers (youth program), and minority recruiting programs". Tamarac occasionally uses newspaper ads.

None of the departments responding to the survey reported giving starting bonuses. Tamarac does not give starting bonuses either.

Relating to the hiring process, the following information was supplied: 12 departments used a written test, 10 used a practical test, 2 used a psychological exam, and 9 used a polygraph. Tamarac Fire Rescue uses only an interview followed with a physical exam upon being offered a position.

- What methods can Tamarac Fire Rescue employ to encourage personnel to stay with the organization?

Methods which Tamarac Fire Rescue may employ, in an effort to encourage personnel to stay, are: a review of current management practices throughout the city as well as the fire department, the development of a new hiring process to include employee agreements and a new orientation program, enhancement of the recruiting process, development of a plan to meet or exceed industry standards in

terms of compensation, promotional opportunities, and physical growth, development of a committee to study and develop plans to alleviate, or eliminate the problems that were identified and create a process in which to empower employees, and a review of possible retirement plans .

DISCUSSION

As the focus of the research project centered on those employees who were not vested, it was quickly determined we were studying the group of people who fell into the “Generation X” profile. The median age of these individuals was approximately 26.4 years old. There was much literature written on the subject of managing the “Gen X” employee and the various characteristics these individuals have and the mores they adhere to.

“Gen Xer’s have a negative view of the world watching more violent TV than any other generation, and being repeatedly reminded of escalating crime statistics, AIDS, pollution and nuclear threat. About 40 percent of Gen Xer’s are products of divorce. Those whose parents stayed together often found themselves alone at home, hence the term “turn-key” children, as both parents worked. This produced “home-alone individualists” but also made these people more diverse as they looked to others for close relationships they lacked at home. This also created an independence which is where the misconception of disloyalty comes in; this generation will not “slave away” as they saw their grandparents do only to receive a gold watch when they retire. If they are not getting what they want out of the workplace, either financially, or more importantly, in terms of self-fulfillment, they will leave. They crave attention, have a propensity for fun, often question the boss, and have unrealistic and materialistic views, however they also have a propensity to get things done, show greater entrepreneurship, better

family values, a better grasp of technological changes, and a keen business savvy” (Losyk, 1997, p.4-6).

In looking at Losyk’s observations of this group of people it would seem the most positive approach Tamarac could use would be to remove the negativity from the workplace. This may, or may not be possible. However, a process whereby personnel, all personnel including the Gen X people who Losyk contends need challenges, should be able to help determine their destiny and goals, as well as those of the department’s would be a logical step. Outlaw’s recommendations are very similar to the process by which a department becomes accredited, which is one of Tamarac’s goals, and also serve the new personnel as well as the veteran personnel in combating negativity. These recommendations are: create the proper work environment, design the job for maximum use of skills, provide continuous learning and growth opportunities, create alternate career paths, certify skills, rotation of personnel, create lines of formal communication, and last but not least, use of employee agreements (Outlaw, 1998).

Tamarac needs to re-exam its hiring process. If we are losing so many people, we may not be getting the right people in the first place. In “Hire the Best...Avoid The Rest”, Mercer writes that there are traits that can be “forecasted” during the interview process. There are specific questions and based upon the answers given to these questions, the traits will either be revealed, or not. All of the related criteria concerning the questions and which comments to look for within the answers are too numerous to list in this research project, but the specific traits should be listed. These traits include: poise under pressure, being a self-starter, being achievement-oriented, desire for higher earnings, follows rules and regulations, handles obstacles well, optimism, high energy, candidness, creativity, verbal skills,

persuasiveness, tact, friendliness, assertiveness, and many more (Mercer, 1993). Many of these traits correlate with those of the Generation X people who are the bulk of Tamarac's applicants.

In keeping with Shapero's suggestion to concentrate on effective channels of recruitment, Tamarac Fire Rescue should set up recruitment booths at various fire-rescue functions. These booths could hand out publications detailing Tamarac's compensation and benefits package, as well as various aspects of the community that may appeal to persons who may want to live and work in South Florida.

The results of personal interviews with individuals who had terminated their career with Tamarac Fire Rescue revealed one of the primary causes of their leaving was negativity among veteran employees. Other significant reasons included the Department's lack of industry standards including facets as varied as compensation, a standard orientation program that included sufficient mentoring, a plan for growth that was shared with all members, a clear promotional process and known and achievable goals. Results of the research also revealed that Tamarac Fire Rescue is not unlike many other small fire departments and that when a large department is doing a mass hire, then small fire departments in nearby areas will suffer some attrition, particularly with Gen X personnel whom, generally speaking, tend to change jobs with more frequency than did their parents and if they perceive their current job contains negative elements of which they have no control.

While the information gleaned from the survey of nearby fire departments did not compel the use of an employment agreement, or contract, none of the other departments suffered from the exorbitant attrition that Tamarac had experienced.

Recommendations of this project were as varied as the results of the research, however, plans were developed to deal with each of the departmental problems that became apparent during the

research and several recommendations were made. These recommendations included: a review of current management practices throughout the city as well as the fire department, the development of a new hiring process to include employee agreements, a new orientation program, development of a plan to meet or exceed industry standards in terms of compensation, promotional opportunities, and physical growth, a development of an “accreditation” committee to empower employees and develop plans and processes to alleviate, or eliminate the problems that were identified, and a review of possible retirement plans .

RECOMMENDATIONS

Tamarac Fire Rescue Management needs to reestablish its hiring process. Most departments that reported little or no attrition in their organizations also had more stringent hiring processes, including written testing, practical testing, psychological exams, and polygraphs. This process builds in a “weeding out” process that better assures a candidate’s likelihood of being matched up with the hiring organization’s culture and work philosophy.

Recently, several of the new employees, who fall into the Gen X categorization, were empowered to develop a practical test for the hiring process (Appendix C). This megacode scenario tests both the applicants knowledge as well as skills and by its very nature lends more professionalism to the department. The industry standard in Broward County is completing a practical test and those applicants trying out for a job expect this procedure. If they are not required to submit to this testing, then they may make the assumption that “the department is easy to get on with and just as easy to get out of”, as one of the former employees stated in an interview. This has been a complaint that veteran

employees have registered with management on numerous occasions, along with the complaint that “we are not getting the best there is out there”. A more stringent hiring process should help alleviate the concerns of both veteran employees and recent hires that those coming onto the job have at least an acceptable competency.

Most of the personnel whom recently left Tamarac Fire Rescue reported that “negativity from veteran employees” was a significant contributor to why they left the department. Management needs to deal with this negative environment, aggressively, if the organization means to continue to exist. Without new employees coming into the organization and assuming leadership roles, the organization will fail and will be absorbed by either another of the county’s fire rescue organization’s, or perhaps by a private entity.

The department needs to look at growth, too. While the community and the fire rescue responsibilities have grown exponentially since the last station was built in 1980, there has been no growth at all to the infrastructure that is the department. This growth would lead to additional and needed promotions, which in turn would effect morale positively. A committee has been formed and recommendations for another fire station are being formulated.

Management techniques that include empowering existing employees, perhaps by allowing them to work on long term projects such as accreditation of the department, development of a new station, raising incentives and/or salaries, and/or developing these veterans for promotional opportunities. Lastly, an “early out” program of retirement needs to be considered for those individuals who cannot adapt to the enormous change this department has undergone since adding full EMS response to its responsibilities.

In the summer of 1999, a group of department directors, including those from Personnel and Risk Management, and several managers from various departments in Tamarac formed a committee to deal with the employee retention rate in Tamarac. The committee developed a general plan to submit to the city manager (Appendix D). Fire Department management should adopt the recommendations of the committee in respect to the department's needs and its own attrition problem.

Management needs to implement and oversee a partnership program, partnering new employees with more experienced partners whom can help mentor them. These partners become a unit and Battalion Chiefs may then put them into a rotation schedule so that both new and veteran employees have equal time on the rescue truck as well as the engine. This rotation is in line with Losyk's recommendation for managing Gen Xer's but can work across the board with all employees. One of the three 24-hour shifts has begun this practice. Only two persons have left this shift, one for geographic considerations. The other two shifts have shared the loss of the fourteen persons and are not using this partner/rotation system.

An employee agreement has been designed and should be implemented (Appendix E). Again, many of the departments in the Broward County area do not use these types of contract but many do not experience the exorbitant attrition Tamarac has suffered.

In addition to the above mentioned recommendations, Tamarac Fire Rescue needs to look at new and positive ways to recruit new personnel. One such method may be setting up booths at various fire-rescue related conferences to promote the image of Tamarac and pass out publications detailing Tamarac's compensation and benefits package.

An evaluation of these changes in the system should be conducted in one year, however,

changes in the exorbitant attrition Tamarac Fire Rescue has been experiencing should be noted before then. One test will be if another large department in this area (Broward County) conducts a mass hire. If we retain more of our non-vested employees during one of these hires, then the logical conclusion will be that at least some of these recommendations have been effective.

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Appendix A

DETERMINING CRITICAL SUCCESS CRITERIA FOR MITIGATING ATTRITION/RETENTION PROBLEMS IN THE FIRE SERVICE

A Research Project For The Executive Fire Officer Program And Tamarac Fire Rescue

Please answer the following questions about your department. Please circle the most appropriate answer, or fill in the answer.

1. What is the number of personnel on your department? _____
2. How many calls do you run per year? _____
3. Are you experiencing a high degree of turnover? Yes No
4. Of the people whom are leaving, are most of them going to other departments? Yes No
5. If these departing personnel are going to another department, is it generally:
 - a) larger departments b) smaller departments c) about the same size d) other _____
6. People most often leave my department because they desire (circle those that apply to your department):
 - a) higher pay b) better benefits; vacation time, incentives, pension, etc c) a department that will provide them with various experiences d) to get away from negative environment/veteran co-workers
 - e) to alleviate burnout f) more promotional opportunities g) just to work at a larger department
 - h) just to work at a smaller department I) to get out of the service j) a clear vision of the department's goals
7. Approximately how much does it cost you to recruit and train new personnel? _____
8. Are most of the people who leave your department: vested? non-vested?
9. Number of years to become vested on your department? _____
10. Do you employ any measures to assure you may retain new personnel? Yes No
11. Relating to the previous question, can you briefly describe these measures?

12. Do you have new recruits sign a contract to stay for a certain number of years and, if so, do they have to pay back the cost of training if they leave early? Yes No

13. Do you actively recruit new personnel, that is, send someone to various locations to search for potential candidates? Yes No

14. Do you offer starting bonuses? Yes No

15. Does your hiring process employ any of the following please circle all that apply: a) a written test
 b) a practical test (such as a megacode, etc) c) a psychological exam d) a polygraph

Appendix B

PERSONAL INTERVIEW FORMAT

I am conducting an interview with persons whom have recently left Tamarac Fire Rescue, or are leaving Tamarac Fire Rescue in the very near future. I am doing this for a research project for the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program.

The following are some reasons firefighters cite for leaving one department to go to another. Please answer "yes" if the reason correlates with your reason(s) for leaving Tamarac, or "no" if it does not. Please feel free to expand on your answers, or add any reasons that are not addressed here. Please be as truthful as possible. Your identity will be kept confidential and only your answers will be used to develop data gathered in this survey. Would you please assist me by answering the following questions concerning your departure from our employment?

1. Was higher pay a reason?
2. Better benefits, vacation, leaves, bonuses, incentives, etc?
3. More promotional opportunities?
4. Better working/living conditions?
5. You just wanted to work for a bigger department?
6. A bigger department offers a wider range of experiences?
7. Veteran employees you worked with at Tamarac were too negative, or did not make you feel welcome?
8. Management did not convey career opportunities to you?
9. Management did not convey future department goals to you?

10. Call volume was too high?
11. Calls did not have enough variety?
12. You wanted to fight more fires?
13. Equipment/apparatus was not adequate?
14. Was geography an issue (you wanted to work in a certain city, or be closer to where you live, etc.)?
15. Personal reasons?
16. What is your age?
17. Do you anticipate staying with your new department?
18. Is there anything we could have done to keep you at Tamarac Fire Rescue?
19. Would you consider returning to work at Tamarac Fire Rescue?
20. Would you advise a friend/colleague to apply for employment at Tamarac Fire Rescue?

Any other reasons?

Appendix C

Megacode Testing for Firefighter / Paramedic Applicants

Emergency medical care provided in the prehospital setting requires numerous critical decisions expected of all fire rescue members during every rescue response. The competent decision-making process of every member of the fire rescue team is critical for the successful outcome of rescue calls.

Due to Tamarac's large volume of Advanced Life Support calls, the need for a megacode examination system similar to those utilized in other fire rescue systems has been recognized by the rescue providers in Tamarac.

Tamarac Fire Department has implemented megacode testing as a part of the hiring process, to be performed after the first interview with the Fire Department panel but prior to the last interview with the Fire Chief. This will give more insight into the applicant's ability to perform under pressure with composure and self-confidence. Opportunities to demonstrate critical decision-making skills be a major part of this examination. This procedure will assess the knowledge, competency and composure of the applicants. This information will help ensure the quality of care provided by Tamarac Fire Department.

Format for ACLS "megacode testing".

A sample scenario:

You are dispatched to an emergency medical call with a crew of two other EMT's (who may help but must be directed by the candidate) and find a 45 year-old man, unconscious, and unresponsive. Bystanders there give little to no history of this patient. You have all your equipment from the truck: EKG/cardiac monitor, airway bag, and drug box. There is a hospital approximately five miles away. What do you do?

Critical pass/fail points *(for a cardiac arrest patient in an unstable ventricular rhythm)*:

Candidate must:

- check for scene safety (downed wires, chemical spills, causes of trauma, etc.)
- perform BLS procedures (open airway, start CPR)
- upon determining patient's cardiac rhythm, candidate must deliver 3 consecutive and increasing defibrillating shocks
- properly start intravenous line
- intubates patient with proper tube and technique
- administer proper drugs in proper sequence, checking dates and explaining dosages

- follow sequence of drug-shock-drug-shock, etc
- upon regaining stable rhythm, candidate must immediately check for pulse, blood pressure and spontaneous breathing
- properly sets up lidocaine maintenance drip
- properly sets up dopamine drip to raise blood pressure
- properly encodes hospital via radio to give patient status and signify transport

If a candidate fails with any of the above critical pass/fail points, they are told what they failed on and are placed on a separate list. If a need for future candidates arises, these failed candidates are asked to come back and retest using a new emergency scenario, which is also based on American Heart Association ACLS practices.

Note: this phase of the hiring process was approved by the Fire Chief and the Personnel Department in July, 1999.

Appendix D
STRATEGIC PLAN
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

August 2, 1999

Committee: Maria Swanson and Jim Sredzinski -

Co-Chairs: Pat Kendrick, Amber Denney, Mark Greenspan, Lance Moll, Diane Phillips and Keith Wilder.

Strategies for Attracting and Retaining a Talented Workforce

Compensation: The City must continue to monitor and update as appropriate its Classification and Pay Plan to ensure that it is competitive in the market. The City should continue to tailor its classification and pay system to the needs of the organization when a different system such as broadband, skill-based or other structure is more appropriate and addresses a specific problem or need in the organization.

The City should also look to expand the City's performance-based pay system to general bargaining employees through the negotiations process in order to reward those employees who excel in delivering efficient and effective services to Tamarac citizens.

Benefits: The creation of a diverse, flexible, and responsive benefit program is a given in light of the goal stated in the heading. Assurance of the continued financial security and the professional development of the employee is critical. In addition to the current array of benefits provided, the following are also being considered:

- Long-term care
- Long-term disability for all employees
- Educational incentives
- Four-tier rating plan for health insurance
- Group homeowners and personal automobile liability insurance
- Individual and group financial advisement
- Greater deferred compensation options

Performance Evaluations: The City implemented a performance evaluation system for all City employees in October 1997. Improving the evaluation system to include key elements that tie directly

to City and departmental goals and objectives would enhance accountability and help employees focus on goal achievement and clearly define expectations. A more formalized individual development plan can also be made part of the annual evaluation process.

Development and Training: The City must expand its training function to continue to provide overall training opportunities to all employees, as well as to expand the training-related support services to departments to develop training specifically tailored to individual departmental needs. A review of policies related to certifications, tuition reimbursement and continuing education would also assist to enhance individual and professional development.

Other Work-Life Enhancements: The City should assess flexible and alternative schedule arrangements and other enhancements that will improve City operations, while at the same time allowing employees the flexibility to balance their work and family life. Additionally, integrating the component of safety into all operations provides a feeling of security and promotes the well-being of all employees. Components of an effective program would include: analysis of operations with inherent hazards; development of rules to cope with the hazards; and continuous training on hazard recognition and method development to defeat the hazards.

Strategies for Streamlining and Improving Work Practices:

Improving Internal Policies, Procedures and Processes: The City should undertake operational reviews of City operations, policies, procedures and practices in order to streamline its operations and improve the efficient and effective delivery of quality services. The establishment of an internal audit function is critical to moving ahead with this program. Several processes that will be examined and assessed for their streamlining potential include: agenda review; Development Review Committee; budget transfer; open enrollment.

Policy and Procedures Documentation: City wide administrative policies are in continuous development. Policies in the areas of personnel and purchasing, for example, must be updated to comply with changes in the laws, to facilitate and streamline operations, and to improve services to citizens. Greater interdepartmental coordination of new policies so as to achieve consensus also needs to be accomplished.

Technological Advancements: Expansion of information technology in an effort to provide a transparent, seamless and efficient computing environment to City staff, residents and visitors remains the ultimate goal of the City. Projects currently underway include a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS), image/document processing and electronic bill payment systems. Fax / e-mail integration, enhanced citizen access to City information utilizing the Internet and other telecommunication options will further this endeavor.

A Citywide telemetry system improvement is in the works that will provide the City staff reliable, online

access to control and monitor the City's Water Distribution, Wastewater and Stormwater Collection facilities and provide the citizens of Tamarac with a state of the art utility system.

Other areas of technological advancements are being identified to expand the City's innovative use of information technology.

Strategies for Improving the Work Environment:

Increased Participation, Communication and Recognition of Employees: Employees perform best when they feel their opinions and input are valued by the organization. The city needs to establish work groups and committees, which include all employees from all backgrounds and levels, to provide input on critical issues facing the City.

Appendix E**An Employee Agreement with Tamarac Fire Rescue**

I, _____, as a condition of employment with Tamarac Fire Rescue and the City of Tamarac, Florida, do hereby agree to reimburse the City the costs of training and orientation if I terminate my employment with the City prior to being employed for two years. I understand the costs associated with training and orientation are currently set at ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) and this amount would be prorated according to the time spent in the employ of Tamarac Fire Rescue. I also agree that all books, manuals, uniforms and protective clothing will be returned upon my terminating employment with Tamarac Fire Rescue. Furthermore, I understand that these costs are in addition to and separate from the costs of further individual education as per specified by IAFF, Union Local 3080, Labor-Management Contract.